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LEADING CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

Ten Services with themes related to Nature

By

SOPHIA L. FAHS

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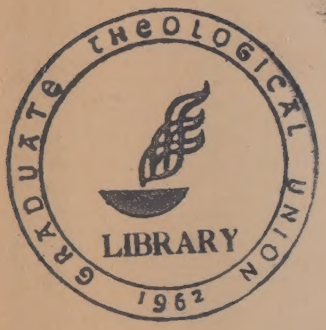

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SUGGESTIONS FOR SERVICES OF WORSHIP

Introduction

These suggestions have been prepared in connection with the study of Nature as outlined in Bertha Stevens' *How Miracles Abound,* and in the Leaflets for children prepared to be used in connection with it. The themes and stories suggested, however, may be used in services of worship for children of the Primary and Junior Departments, whether or not this particular Nature course is being pursued. Consequently the subjects are not arranged under the titles used in the Leaflets. The appropriateness of some of the themes to the particular units suggested for the course is apparent. Others of the themes may be used during the study of any of the units.

Detailed outlines for the services are purposely not given. The choice of hymns is dependent on the age range of the group involved and upon the nature of hymn books used by the church school. Appropriate poetry and Bible selections are frequently suggested, however, together with hints on how to relate these to the central theme. The suggestions given are primarily meant to help leaders in choosing stimulating and impressive themes for services and to make available good stories by which these themes may be made vivid to the children. These stories are either told in full or the needed information is given showing where they may be found.

The order in which the themes are given is intentionally not significant. Leaders should choose the appropriate theme on the basis of the on-going experiences of the children.

A Few Practical Hints

1. Choose one theme—a large thought or question—as the core of the service, and plan the songs, readings, story and prayers so as to awaken and concentrate the children's interest in that central idea. Finally give it expression in some closing prayer, sung or said. The statements of the themes as given, however, are intended for the leaders only and not for the children.
2. Do not feel the necessity of following one particular order of worship, but choose only what is likely to help in creating a favorable mood and to deepen the impression. Arrange these parts in such an order that the service comes to a climax near the end.
3. Keep all parts of the service in language which the children can understand.
4. Use no hymns whose thoughts are not such that the children in the group can sing them with enough understanding to feel the true and most important meaning of the hymn.
5. In leading in prayer, express honestly those of your own thoughts and desires with which you think the children will share so that they may feel "He has prayed as we should like to have prayed ourselves". But never pray *for* the children. Pray *with* them.
6. Prepare the wording of your prayer beforehand with care, but do not read it. Even if you falter, your prayer is likely to be spoken with more inward feeling if you do not read it. Keep your prayers short and simple and naturally dignified.
7. Make careful and thorough preparation for telling stories. Be imaginative. Give the details vividly. Be strong and poised in posture. Use an interesting quality and varied tones

of voice. Throw your own feelings into the story.

8. Do not feel obliged to read or quote Scripture in every service. Sometimes a poem or a short modern quotation is more meaningful.
9. Plan usually for a service about a half-hour in length, if possible. At least, give the feeling of leisure while the service lasts.
10. Use piano or organ music to help create and maintain a mood of quiet thoughtfulness.
11. Have something beautiful in the front center, that is suggestive of the theme or that promotes a feeling of quiet or aspiration.
12. Have the children follow some definite rules about entering and leaving the room where the service is held.

SERVICE I

CENTRAL THEME: *What one man did by planting trees, or the significance in making the world more beautiful.*

Introductory Talk

"What do you plant when you plant a tree?" This may be put as a question to the children. After their ideas have been given, the leader may read the poem entitled "What do we plant when we plant a tree?" by Henry Abbey.

What do we plant when we plant a tree?
We plant the ship, which will cross the sea.
We plant the mast to carry the sails;
We plant the planks to withstand the gales—
The keel, the keelson, the beam, the knee;
We plant the ship when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the houses for you and me.
We plant the rafters, the shingles, the floors,
We plant the studding, the lath, the doors,
The beams and siding, all parts that be;
We plant the house when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
A thousand things that we daily see;
We plant the spire that out-towers the crag;
We plant the staff for our country's flag,
We plant the shade, from the hot sun free;
We plant all these when we plant the tree.

—HENRY ABBEY

After the reading, be certain that the children understand how much more we do when we plant a tree than merely put it in the ground.

After the singing of a song or the playing of music as a background for the children's further imaginings, the leader may tell the following story of Edward Bok. It has been adapted from "An Introduction of Two Persons" in *The Americanization of Edward Bok* by Edward Bok, Scribners.

The Pirates and the Trees

Some years ago on a small barren island not far off the coast of Holland there lived a band of pirates. They had chosen the island for a home because the coast of the island was rocky and very dangerous. Many Dutch fishing boats and merchant ships loaded with valuable goods were often wrecked near the shores of this island. During storms and fogs the pirates were always on the watch for these passing ships. When they sighted

one near the shore they would wait until it had been blown against some rock and was stuck in the shallow water and beaten and broken by the waves dashing against it. Then they would row out to the ship, climb up on board, murder all the sailors and steal their goods.

As the years went by the Dutch merchants grew very fearful of these pirates and complained to the King of Holland.

Finally, King William decided that it was time to do something to rid the island of these pirates. So he called before him a young lawyer named Edward Bok, only twenty years old at the time, who was living in the city of Hague.

"Mr. Bok," said the King, "I want you to go to the island of the pirates and clean it up and rid us of those pirates."

It was an adventurous job for the young Mr. Bok to undertake, and hard enough even for a long time soldier. Mr. Bok was not a soldier, however, and he did not intend to fight the pirates. The plan he thought out for cleaning up the island of pirates Mr. Bok kept a secret.

King William trusted Mr. Bok and gave him a free opportunity to do the job in whatever way he thought would work. First of all, then, the King proclaimed Mr. Bok the Mayor and Judge of the island, and the young man decided to go and live on the island with the pirates and get acquainted with them.

"You're a strange man," said his friends, "to wish to live on that dreary barren island, with no trees, no grass, not a living green thing of any kind to be seen and with not even a bird to sing for you. The island is just about as ugly a place as can be found anywhere. Besides, we should think you would be afraid of the pirates."

"An ugly place," answered Mr. Bok, "is ugly only because it is not beautiful." And beautiful he determined the island was going to be. "What is more," he said, "pirates are people like the rest of us. They are pirates because they haven't found something better to do."

So Mr. Bok sailed over to the island, built a little home for himself and lived with the pirates. Although at first they did not much like the idea of having a Mayor and Judge, by the time one winter had gone by, Mr. Bok and his pirate neighbors were good friends.

One day Mr. Bok said to them, "We can make this island into a beautiful place. If some trees grew on the island it would be so changed that you wouldn't know it was the same place. Let's bring some trees over from Holland and plant them. I believe they will grow."

The pirates, however, shook their heads. They had better use for their money, they thought, than to waste it on trees.

"Very well," said the young Mayor, "I will plant trees myself."

To their surprise that spring the young man planted one hundred trees without asking any of them to help with the work.

As he dug the holes and lifted the little trees into them and pounded the earth around them, the pirates stood about in a very superior way, making such remarks as these: "You're a fool! Don't you know it's too cold here for trees to grow? In the winter the cold north winds will freeze the young trees, then where will your money be? The storms will blow them down."

The young man refused to become discouraged. "Then I'll plant more trees," was all he would say.

To the surprise of the pirates, however, the trees began to grow. Moistened by the salt mists from the sea, they did not wither. In fact they grew amazingly well. When the next spring came around, Mr. Bok planted more trees and the following spring he planted more still.

Mr. Bok also began to build some good roads and a public square and a park for the little island. He sent to Holland for shrubs and flowers as well as for trees, and he planted them, too. By this time, some of the pirates had begun to help,

and earned money for buying food without stealing from wrecked ships.

After Mr. Bok had been living with these pirates for two years and it began to look as though his plans might succeed, and that some day the island might really be beautiful, he sailed home across the water to Holland.

When he came back not long after, he brought with him a wife. A certain young woman had decided that she loved the young Mr. Bok enough to marry him. Now she was going to live with him on the island with his pirate neighbors.

"You may keep on planting and raising trees," she said to her husband as they were working together one day in their little home, "but I am going to raise children."

One by one the years passed by. The trees grew bigger and bigger. The roads around the island that had once been sun-baked and hot became pleasantly cool and shaded by trees. On all sides were pretty gardens and parks and woods. Several small children played in the Bok yard.

Even the pirates themselves began planting trees and shrubs and gardens about their own homes. With these to take care of, they began to have less and less time to spend on being pirates.

And another interesting thing happened. When the island was barren and ugly, there was not a place for miles around in the stormy sea where birds being driven by the cold fierce winds and flying south, might stop in their flying and rest and find shelter or food. So often too tired to fly any longer, they dropped in the water and were drowned. In the late summer the pirates were accustomed to see around the island hundreds of dead birds floating on the water.

Then a day came when these tired birds, flying in the storm across the North Sea, seeking a place of safety, spied far off in the distance some of the highest branches of Mr. Bok's little trees standing, as it were, up out of the water; and the birds were glad. Flying straight toward the trees, they rested happily on their branches. Grateful for this new shelter, the birds burst out into singing. It was sweet music to the islanders. They wanted to plant a thousand more trees just for the sake of the birds. The little children in the Bok home loved to watch the birds as they flew about. One day they saw two nightingales building their nest in a tree near the home. The women and children from all over the island would often gather at dusk in the little village square and listen to the birds singing.

After more years had passed, the island once barren and dreary, and a lonely place in which to live, became one of the beauty spots of all of Europe. As the trees grew taller, more and more birds of many different varieties came and lived in their branches. Men and women from all over the world who loved birds and who wished to study them sailed over to the island just to see its birds because they had been told that there they could find more kinds of birds than anywhere else.

So many birds made nests on the island and laid their eggs and had baby birds there, that after a while the island was given a new name. Instead of being called the island of the pirates it was called "Egg Island," because so many birds nested there and raised their families.

Artists hunting for lovely pictures to paint heard about this beautiful "Egg Island." They came from many different countries of the world, and painted pictures of the ocean and the rocky shores, and the woods and the nesting birds on the island.

One after another, thirteen happy babies were born in the Bok home and played in the shaded gardens and on the sandy beach. As each child grew up and went out from the island home to live his own life on the mainland or elsewhere, the mother would say to him when she said good-bye: "Now as you go out into the world, take with you the spirit your father had. Wherever you may live make

the world more beautiful because you have been in it."

As for the pirates, for years no one has been able to find any pirates on the island. With so many gardens and parks and roads and birds and with people having so many interesting things to do, it doesn't seem worthwhile to anybody to be a pirate any longer.

SERVICE II

CENTRAL THEME: *How people and trees may be alike.*

Two striking Bible passages suggest this comparison. The leader may read Jeremiah 17: 5-8 or Psalm 1: 3-4. Before doing so, he may say if he uses the first Psalm: "The writer was thinking of two kinds of people. See if you can tell what kinds they are." Then the reading may be done after this manner. "One kind he says 'is like the chaff which the wind driveth away.' The other kind of person he says is 'like a tree', etc. What two kinds of people do you imagine the writer was thinking about?" The children will probably say "good and bad." The leader may say that the writer too was thinking of those two kinds, only he used other words to describe these people. He called one kind, etc. Then the leader may ask "What is there about a good person that is like a tree planted by streams of water? Why does the Psalmist say the other person is like chaff?"

The leader might have the verses he wishes to use mimeographed on sheets so that the children can read them or can have them as they leave the service in order to learn the words the Bible writer used.

Several modern poems may also be read if it seems desirable; one near the beginning of the service and the other (Edwin Markham's prayer poem) near the close.

Possible poems are the following:

"Do Trees Have Feelings?" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. (Leaflet on *Trees.* No. IV.)

"A Tree, It seems to me" by Jeanette Perkins Brown. (Teacher's Guide to *How Miracles Abound,* p. 8.)

"A Prayer" by Edwin Markham.

SERVICE III

CENTRAL THEME: *Gifts that come to us from Trees.*

Story: *The Legend of the Palm Tree,* from the book by this name written by Margarida Estrela Bandeira Duarte, Grosset and Dunlap, 1942. This story gives in a fascinating way to children a rich feeling of gratitude for the many blessings that come from trees.

Children may be stirred to think of other trees without whose gifts our world would be much poorer.

The leader should be ready to put into a prayer of thanksgiving thoughts the children have expressed.

In *Nature Magazine,* September, 1937, is an article on the "Ten Most Important Trees of the World." This would be an interesting theme to think about in the classroom after the service.

SERVICE IV

CENTRAL THEME: *Gifts that come to us from Trees.*

STORY: Johnny Appleseed.

Since this story is not yet easily available in suitable form for telling, it is here given as Jeanette P. Brown has rewritten it. Mr. John Chapman (which is the real name of Johnny Appleseed) was an American hero of pioneer days whose story may well be made the core of a service of worship. He was motivated by one big idea and that was the immeasurable values in an apple seed and the tree into which it could grow. These values he gave his life to spread throughout our land. One hundred thousand square miles of territory are still being blessed as a result of the efforts of this one man.

The story as retold here is based on an article in the *Encyclopedia of American Biography* and on another article in *Harpers New Monthly Magazine,* published in 1871, Vol. XLII, entitled "Johnny Appleseed, a Pioneer Hero," by W. D. Haley.

Johnny Appleseed

In the days when your grandmother's grandmother was a little girl much of this country was covered by forests, and very few white people lived even as far west as Ohio. Families living in New England were packing their belongings into covered wagons and with their chickens and cows and children, they slowly made their way west to find some place where there were water and good prospects for hunting and fishing so that they might settle down and live off the country. The men would cut down enough of the trees to make a clearing, and would build a few log cabins, while the women would dig up patches of ground around the cabins where they could raise potatoes and a few other vegetables.

Living was very hard. They had few books to read and little time to read them even if they had had them. The children had to grow up without schools or churches. They worked along with their fathers and mothers, carrying water from the spring for drinking, cooking and washing, chopping and bringing in wood to keep them all warm, and taking care of the children still younger. They had no toys except what they could make themselves, and few pretty things.

Nor were there at first any stores in these small towns, and the people had to depend on traveling peddlers who would go about from clearing to clearing carrying on horseback a few of the most necessary household articles and pieces of clothing to sell.

Into one of these little settlements in Ohio there came one day an odd looking man, the like of whom the settlers had never seen before. Instead of a shirt and trousers, he wore an old potato sack for a suit and his hat was nothing but a tin dish. As he trudged along barefoot beside his heavily loaded horse, this new peddler was a strange sight. The children in the settlement ran out of their cabins to get a good look at him. "What a strange looking man," they thought. "What did he have in his big bag on the horse's back?" They were sure it was something interesting. Anyone from outside was interesting.

"Do you have any blue ribbons?" a little blue-eyed girl asked hopefully.

"No, little lady, but I'll have some next time I come, you'll see," the man promised, smiling, his black eyes looking straight at her.

"Got any knives?" some of the boys asked, but again the man shook his head. "Something a lot better," he told the boys confidentially. "What I have in my bag is alive."

The eyes of the boys and girls grew wide. They probably were thinking of puppies or snakes, or some strange animal. But the twinkly-eyed man laughed and said, "No. Apple seeds!" and took a shiny brown seed from his bag.

"Doesn't look like much does it? But there's a whole tree full of apples—nice juicy red apples, in that seed. I'm on my way to plant some orchards along Licking Creek, but if you want to have some apple trees of your own, you run and tell your mothers and fathers that I'll sell some of these good seeds for an old coat, or some supper, or a place to spend the night, if there's no money to pay. Tell them my name is Johnny."

The children scattered to return promptly with their mothers or fathers. To these people the thought of apples brought homesick memories of the juicy red fruit they used to gather when they were children, back in their eastern homes. How it made them long to have some in their new homes! There were apple pies too, apple sauce and pudding. The parents looked at their bare clearing, where the burning sun shone down all through the summer months, and thought of the welcome cooling shade of an apple orchard.

Gladly they took the apple seeds. Some paid a little money for them. Some gave the man a cast-off coat, a hat, or a pair of trousers. Others gave him a paper on which they wrote a promise to pay when they had more money. Someone invited him to supper, and said he could sleep on his cabin floor. In whatever way they cared to pay Johnny was satisfied, for he knew the settlers were very poor, and money was not what he wanted most.

He wanted orchards planted in this western wilderness, like those he had known as a boy in New England, so that the settlers and their children, and their children's children might have apples to eat and might enjoy the shade of the trees for years and years to come. And he wanted something else. He had something precious to share with these lonely hard-working people. After supper, as the family sat around the open fire, he asked "Would you like to hear some *news right fresh from heaven?*" And then he took from under his sackcloth coat a book.

Sprawled on the floor by the light of the fire, Johnny read to them from the Bible some of the stories of Jesus and his teachings about love. The fathers and mothers listened gladly. It had been a long time since they had heard or read these stories. Now their children were hearing them. They liked the way he talked and the gleam in his big black eyes.

The next morning, as the children showed Johnny around the clearing, they found that he knew a great many interesting things about the woods and the animals. He helped them also to plant the new seeds. He promised to come back and see how their apple trees were growing, and the children walked with him as far as they dared. When he moved on he left a village full of new friends behind.

So Johnny Appleseed continued to travel about with his loads of apple seeds. Sometimes he would find an open space along a creek, hemmed in by giant trees, where no white people were living. But even there he would plant his seeds. He set out whole orchards until he was satisfied that there were plenty of apple trees in that part of Ohio for many people. All the people in the little log cabins and settlements along his way came to know him, for he kept going back to see how the trees were growing, and to sell and plant more seeds where some had failed to grow. And he never forgot to bring his *news right fresh from heaven* to the people.

The children loved him especially. "Here comes Johnny Appleseed!" they would cry when they saw him, and ran to meet him. They knew he would have with him lots of ribbons and trinkets for them, and stories of his travels, and always more seeds.

So Johnny Appleseed's orchards grew. By the time he was an old man there was not a log cabin in the whole of that part of our country which did not welcome him. He brought news from outside; he brought *news right fresh from heaven.* He brought an unselfish kindness and love of growing children, and he brought apple seeds to every barren clearing.

He made friends with the Indians who thought of him as a medicine man, for he knew which plants would cure fever and which could be used for snake bites. He still took people's old clothing in payment for his apple seeds, or promises to pay written on pieces of paper, but he kept the clothes only long enough to find someone poorer than himself, and he never bothered to collect the promised payments.

It worried his friends that he was not better protected from sharp stones, rough roads and snake bites. Once a man insisted on giving him a new pair of shoes, but the next time the man saw Johnny Appleseed, he was barefooted again. "I gave them," he explained to his surprised friend, "to someone who needed them more than I did." When asked why he did not wear a real coat, he would say, "This," pointing to his square of sackcloth, "is a good enough coat for any man."

Johnny Appleseed really liked having only a little for himself. It made him feel as if he belonged to those friends of Jesus who traveled along the roads of Palestine nearly two thousand years ago. They had left their homes to teach people how to live more kindly. They had only enough clothes to cover them. They had no money. But they had *news right fresh from heaven* for all the people who would listen.

Johnny Appleseed had plenty of time to think about life as he tramped alone over the country. Life belongs to God, he thought, and it should be lived as God intends. Life in different forms was everywhere; and wherever Johnny Appleseed found it he loved it and wanted to protect it. Some of it he carried in the shiny brown apple seeds. Some of it was in himself. That made him feel a brother to every living creature. He could not willingly hurt even a mosquito. Once when a hornet stung him, instead of killing it, he said "It did not intend to hurt me. It would not be right to hurt the poor thing." One winter night he used a log for a bed, but when he found it disturbed a mother bear and her cubs inside, he moved and made a bed in the snow.

He taught the children he met to be careful of all life and the children loved him. Even the boys never made fun of his queer looks. Instead they crowded around him to hear what he had to tell, or to receive from him the precious bit of life he carried in his pack. The children had the power, he told them, with God's help to make that life grow and grow and produce more life. And they had power within themselves, to make their own lives beautiful.

No one knows how many people heard the *news* from Johnny Appleseed, nor how those who heard it helped others to know it in turn. But we know that because of the seeds he carried and distributed there are thousands of people today all over the Midwestern part of our country who are eating apples grown from the life in his little brown seeds.

SERVICE V

CENTRAL THEME: *There are stories hidden in the things about us for those who can read them.*

Opening Reading

I shall read you a part of a poem that is in the Bible. It is about the heavens, which is an old way of saying the sky.

The heavens proclaim God's splendour,
the sky speaks of his handiwork;
day after day takes up the tale,
night after night makes him known;
their speech has never a word,
not a sound for the ear,
and yet their message spreads
the wide world over,
their meaning carries to earth's end.
—Psalm 19. (Moffatt Translation)

When you have been out of doors on a clear dark night, and have stood quietly looking up at the stars, did it seem to you that they said something, even though there was "not a sound for the ear" and they didn't use any words? And did you know that those very same stars which you saw in the sky shone down on people who wrote the Bible thousands of years ago? When you look up at the stars, what do they seem to tell you? Is it something very splendid and great? Do they start you wondering about God?

(The poem may be even more appreciated if read a second time.)

After the singing of a second song, tell the story entitled:

"I Dream About My Chair." (Leaflet VIII on *Trees.*)

Closing Prayer

SERVICE VI

CENTRAL THEME: *Precious things that no one ever sees.*

The thought may be introduced by the reading of the poem "Strange Collection" by Dorothy Brown Thompson. (Leaflet on *Trees.* No. I.)

Before reading, ask if the children like to make collections. Tell them that the poet writes about a strange collection that no one ever sees.

Has any one made a collection like that? Can they imagine what it could be? Then, after hearing the children's thoughts, read the poem.

Can they now tell what kind of a collection it is? Do any of them have such a collection that "no one ever sees?" Would they be willing to tell about some of the finest things they have in that collection?

In order to give the children time to think over some of their memories and to decide on the very best, which they want to keep a long, long time, ask the pianist to play some soft music as everyone sits quietly, letting memories come back into their minds.

This period should be brief, especially if the children appear to be restless. Have the pianist watch, and be prepared to stop playing on recognizing a signal from the leader.

Then when memories—these invisible things that we keep as treasures in our minds—are asked for, let the children, who have something to tell, stand and wait until called on to speak. If the children do not respond naturally, the leader

may tell of some memory of his own which he feels is especially precious, in the hope that the children may feel freer to speak of their own memories.

When as many things have been reported as it seems desirable to hear, the leader may close the testimonies by reading the little poem of Sara Teasdale's to show how very, very much she thought these memories were worth to her. The poem is called "The Coin."

Into my heart's treasury
I slipped a coin
That time cannot take
Nor a thief purloin.
Oh, better than the minting
Of a gold-crowned king
Is the safe-kept memory
Of a lovely thing.

Then let the leader speak a prayer in behalf of all the group, expressing gratitude for these memories, naming the different types that have been spoken of by the children, and express the desire that we in turn may so live that those who come in contact with us may be given memories, which they too will wish to cherish, or that we may be watchful to see the beauty that is always somewhere near if we but notice it.

SERVICE VII

CENTRAL THEME: *Discovering God for ourselves.*

The Boy Who Had Never Heard of God

Suppose your father or mother had never mentioned God to you. Suppose you had never seen a church nor heard anyone praying. Do you think that you would ever think of God all by yourself? Would you have any ideas of your own about what he might be like? This is a true story of a boy who lived to be ten years old before he ever heard anyone speak of God.

The boy lived in Germany a number of years ago. Although we do not know his name, we shall call him Wilhelm. When he was but a small child scarcely old enough to talk plainly, his mother died, and Wilhelm had only his father left to care for him.

Shortly after the mother's death, the father decided to move out into the country with his son and to live on a farm where there were no neighbors near by to talk with. Of course, Wilhelm was often lonely for his mother, but he was quite happy because his father was a very interesting companion and Wilhelm was devoted to him. And on a farm there are always many things to do and much to see. Wilhelm's playmates were the cats and the dog, the chickens and the geese, the horses and cows.

When Wilhelm grew old enough to be sent to school, the father decided that he would teach his son himself. He and Wilhelm, therefore, had their own school each day, but they usually met out of doors where there were always many things to find out about. The father thought these things were more important for Wilhelm to learn than for him to learn to read books. So the father taught his boy as they fed the baby kittens, or as they played with the new puppies. Besides there were many interesting things to learn about the geese and the chickens, and the birds. As Wilhelm tried to help his father plant or weed the garden, he always had questions to ask about this vegetable or that flower. Sometimes the two had their school while they strolled together slowly through the woods, hunting for wild flowers and snails and little animals.

As Wilhelm grew older, and could carry responsibility, he learned to ride the horse and to milk the cows. During the winter evenings, his father even taught him to carve the shapes of things and animals in wood. Wilhelm thought his father a very wonderful person because he knew so much and was able to do so many hard things.

But as the days passed and Wilhelm grew older, he began to wonder about some things. His father's answers didn't satisfy him. His father could do a great many things, but there were still left many more things which nobody seemed able to do.

There was the rain, for example. One day, Wilhelm wanted his father to make it rain, the garden needed it badly, but his father said he couldn't do it. Another day, Wilhelm wanted his father to make the wind stop blowing so hard, and his father said he couldn't do it. And again, Wilhelm wanted his father to make a dead baby chicken wake up and walk, but his father said nobody could make anything with life in it.

These things puzzled Wilhelm. Who did these things then? His father didn't seem interested to help him answer his questions. So Wilhelm had to work out an answer all his own. He finally decided that it was the Sun up in the sky that did all these things that nobody else could do. Even when it was dark, he thought the Sun could do things. Wilhelm liked to think about the Sun and all the things it could do, and sometimes when he was alone he felt like talking to the Sun. It was a long way off, he knew, but still it seemed near. The Sun seemed to Wilhelm like a wonderful and strong friend. Wilhelm did feel lonely sometimes for a friend, someone else besides his father. He wished he had at least a mother. It was comforting to feel that the good Sun was up there in the sky. But all these thoughts Wilhelm kept secret.

Then one morning, waking early before it was light, Wilhelm dressed in the dark and stepped quietly downstairs and out of doors all by himself. The Sun was still hiding behind the hills beyond the valley at the side of the house. Wilhelm stood for a while alone looking out at the eastern sky. He watched the fleecy clouds turn slowly pink and then golden with light. When finally the bright golden ball peeped above the hilltops, it seemed to Wilhelm like a great Lord mounting the sky with wings of light.

Wilhelm reached out his arms. He felt almost as if he could touch the Sun. He felt as though he could talk to the Sun. He felt as though some One's great arms were folding around him. For once he was no longer feeling lonely. He loved being there.

After a while he knew he should go back to the house for breakfast, but for some reason he could not tell his father what had happened to him. He didn't say anything about being up early when he and his father sat down to breakfast together. He talked about other things.

Now it happened that while Wilhelm had been standing out on the hillside thinking these thoughts, his father had happened to look out of a window and he saw his son. The father thought to himself, "The time has come now at last. My son has really begun to wonder and to think and he is imagining some One greater than man." When the two sat down to eat breakfast, however, the father did not tell his son that he had seen him. He talked about other things.

Not long after, however, on a clear dark night, the father suggested that they sit out on the grass together and watch the stars. It was a beautiful evening and the sky was dotted with thousands of stars. Soon the father began telling the boy what the stars really were. He said that probably almost every one of these stars that they were seeing was really a great big sun like the sun that shone each day, but since those suns were so very,

very far away—millions and millions of miles away—they seemed like mere dots.

When Wilhelm heard these things, something hurt him inside. Such tremendous thoughts were too great for him to bear. It seemed as though his father, in telling him these things, had spoiled the greatness of his Sun, that Sun that had seemed so great and wonderful—his one all-powerful Friend. Wilhelm felt so very badly he could not even tell his father how badly he felt.

The days went by and Wilhelm seemed to have lost his happiness. Again he was lonely in the same old way. Another clear dark night, his father once more took Wilhelm out on to the hillside in the dark and together they sat on the ground and looked up at the thousands of stars sparkling in the sky. The father asked his son to repeat all he had told him before about the stars and then he taught him even more of their greatness and wonder. Finally, the boy could stand the strain no longer and he cried out: "Father, dear father, you have made my Sun seem small, and in his place you have put these thousands of suns. I have been believing that it was one Sun who was all powerful, that it was he who had made us live. That he could do all the things nobody else can do. That he could help us and make us happy. Tell me, father, who are all these other suns? Who? Why are they there? There must be some One greater than all. Some One who makes them all move together. Tell me father—who is he?"

Then the father told his son the very best and greatest thoughts he himself could think. He said that he, too, felt there must be some One—greater than all the suns—who in some way kept all the suns together going round and round in one great orderly, dependable way. Some One who was himself invisible, who had always been and always would be.

Then Wilhelm threw his arms about his father's neck. He could not say in words how happy he was. Together the two knelt on the grass and the father prayed. Wilhelm felt very tiny in so immeasurably large a universe of suns and planets, millions of miles around, yet he felt at home and unafraid. As he walked back into the house with his father, Wilhelm thought to himself, "I am wiser than I have ever been before. I wonder if I ever can be any wiser." [1]

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[1] The outline of this story is found in *The Child's Religion,* by Pierre Bovet. J. M. Dent and Sons, 1928, pp. 72-78.

The leader may follow the story with a prayer of this type, which will express for the children their own wonderings.

Everlasting God!
We, too, feel that there must be Some One
Who was in the beginning,
Is now and ever shall be,
World without end.
The more we know,
The more our wonderings grow.
The greater our universe seems,
The greater our need of Thee.
May we be unafraid to think of Thee.
May we have the courage to grow wiser
As we grow bigger and older. Amen.

SERVICE VIII

CENTRAL THEME: *Snowflakes and the wonderings they awaken.*

Opening Reading and Remarks

Thoughts which the children have already expressed regarding snow may be read to the whole assembly. (See *The Teacher's Guide* to *How Miracles Abound,* p. 33.)

Or one of the poems on *Snow* may be read. (See p. 24.)

The selection from Walt Whitman entitled "Miracles" might have been previously mimeographed and copies given to each person as he entered the room. This could then be used as an opening reading.

If possible secure from some near-by museum or from a university in your state some photographic slides of snowflakes and be prepared to have them thrown on the screen. The American Museum of Natural History, New York City, will loan a set of twenty-five or thirty such slide photos for $1.00 plus the express charges. These slides are exceedingly beautiful and both children and adults are moved by the sight of them.

Before showing the slides tell how such photos were first taken by a High School teacher in a small town in Vermont. (See story "The Snowflake Man" in Leaflet IV on *Dew, Frost, Snow.*) If one of the classes has already heard about Mr. Wilson Bentley let several of the children from the class tell about him. This would make the service more full of meaning for the children.

If slides cannot be found, and a reflectoscope is available, gather from magazines and from a copy of the Leaflet IV a number of pictures of snowflakes and mount them on pieces of pasteboard about the size of a post card and throw these pictures on the screen. If even this procedure is not a possibility, have on hand a number of such pictures and let them be passed around among the children.

After the children have observed the beauty and the symmetry of the snowflakes as well as their amazing variety, such a poem as that by Francis Thompson (see p. 24) should be read. These questions—these wonderings which Mr. Thompson has expressed so beautifully—are our wonderings, too. And what is his answer to the mystery? But does that answer tell us what we wish we might know? What is "silver vapor?" Can vapor be "hammered?" Why did Mr. Blake say it this way? Because he wanted to express how impossible it is for us to understand.

How would a scientist tell the story of what has happened to make the snowflake? And does the scientist's answer tell us what we wish we might know?

And how does it come that these different snowflakes are so different from each other and still always three or six pointed? The number three or double three enters into the making of the snowflake at its very beginning, when first it freezes from "silver vapor." One day a visitor in Mr. Bentley's home asked him "How do you explain this fact?"

And the answer Mr. Bentley gave was "Of course, no one knows but God." But the visitor could not help but put a question again. "How can you explain, Mr. Bentley, the curious dots and loops and graceful whorls and the delicate chiseled edges, all arranged in order about a center?" "Only the Artist who designed and fashioned them knows how it is done," said Mr. Bentley.

And the visitor looking up saw hanging on the wall of the room a cross. This evidently reminded Mr. Bentley of God. But the cross hanging on the wall did not look as most crosses look, for Mr. Bentley had covered it all over with his photographs of snow crystals.[1]

As the friend looked at this snowflake cross, she realized that all through the forty and more years that Mr. Bentley had been taking photographs of snow crystals he had been feeling that somehow these delicate designs of beauty were like hints dropped by God to the earth. And to Mr. Bentley it was so intensely thrill-

[1] These facts taken from *Our Wonderful World,* Frances Jenkins Olcott. Little, Brown, 1935.

ing to look at them, that he wanted everybody to have a chance to see their beauty, too.

A closing prayer should express some of this sense of standing before mystery when we feel we are in God's presence, and a wistful longing to enter more richly into an understanding of Him, as well as gratitude for these overwhelming evidences of beauty.

SERVICE IX

CENTRAL THEME: *The Miracle that is always ours (in our hands).*

Opening Song of Gratitude
Introductory Remarks by the Leader

(to awaken thoughts about our hands):

"An American poet, named Walt Whitman who lived some years ago in New Jersey, was thinking about what we have given us—every one of us—to do with. Some of us have more toys to play with than others. Some have more books to read from than others. Some have more clothes to wear than others. Some of us have electric trains, dolls that will talk, microscopes to see things with, cameras to take pictures with, while others of us have none of these things.

"But there are two things which each one of us has, more wonderful than anything money can buy. This poet thought these were more wonderful than the greatest piece of machinery in the world, more wonderful than a big motor in a power house, or the locomotive in a train, or a ship's engine. In fact, this poet thought that these two things we have to work with should not be called machines at all because they are greater than any kind of machine can possibly be—greater than all the machinery of the world put together! Can you imagine what Walt Whitman was talking about? The two things each of us has are right in front of our eyes this minute. You can see them without turning your head."

The children may guess our eyes, or ears, before guessing the hands. "These are good answers and the poet might well have thought of them. But he was thinking of our two hands, and he said this: *'The narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery.'* Where are the hinges in our hands? What is wonderful about them? What can be so wonderful about one of these hinges as to make it seem greater than all machinery?" (See Leaflet II on *Our Hands* for ways of expressing the wonder in our hands.)

Such an introductory talk may be followed by the singing of another song expressive of gratitude for what is given us, or by a few moments spent quietly while music is played. Then the leader may tell the story which should not only interest the children but which should also center their thought even more impressively on the wonder in our hands. The story may be introduced with some such remarks as these:

"Walt Whitman, a poet, felt deeply the wonder in our hands. They seemed to him like 'miracles' which we carry around with us all the time. The poorest of us has these two wonderful instruments with him always. Walt Whitman tried to say how he felt in poetry. Someone else tried to say how he felt about the wonder in our hands by making up a fairy tale. He felt it was as if we had fairies or elves in our fingers to do wonders for us. This is an old, old story told often to boys and girls in Sweden."

The telling of the story may be followed by the singing of a prayer. One verse of "Father hear the prayer we offer"

would be appropriate. And a brief prayer of benediction may close the service.

If this service is held before the class session it will furnish stimulus for thinking. In one class the children found great pleasure, each in forming a clay hand with a tiny elf standing on each of the fingers and thumb. During the process of molding the hands, there were many opportunities for conversation. A warning perhaps is in place. Guard against moralizing about the story. Let the children work out their own thoughts.

Elsa and the Ten Elves

Once upon a time a little girl lived on a farm in Sweden. As on all other farms the world over, there was much work always needing to be done. There were cows to milk, chickens to feed, dishes to wash, rooms to sweep, baking to do, and even cloth to weave. But Elsa did not like to work. She wanted to play and dance and read books and do as she pleased. Elsa was a pretty girl, and interesting to talk to, and she liked pretty hands and pretty clothes, and good things to eat, but she did not like to work.

Now Christmas time was only a few days off and Elsa was expected to finish weaving the cloth in the loom before that day. Besides she had done almost nothing about preparing goodies for the Christmas dinner, while all the others in the family were up and about at work from morning till night.

Elsa found it especially nice to lie in bed late in the mornings and the family almost gave up counting on her help. But one morning they decided to try harder than usual to get her out of bed. First one of the servants came into her room, and said, "Miss Elsa, someone must prepare the lunch the men are to have who go into the woods today. Will you not rise and help?"

"Go away," said Elsa peevishly, and she turned over and went to sleep again.

Then Elsa's big brother came in. "Elsa, the bread is ready to mix. Mother ought not to have to do everything. Get up." But Elsa paid no attention to him.

Then finally Mother herself came in and said, "Elsa, dear, there is so much to be done. Your weaving will not be finished by Christmas, and there is much else to be done. You want to enjoy Christmas with us all, don't you? Then you must help prepare for it."

"Oh, why do I have to get up when it is so cold?" complained Elsa.

But when her Mother had left the room, Elsa got up. She was in an angry mood. She spoke to no one as she ate her breakfast. Then she ran through the kitchen to the little room where her loom stood. She slammed the door behind her and threw herself down on a couch.

"No!" she screamed. "I won't! I won't make a servant of myself. I won't wear my hands out working, working, always working. Oh me! Is there no one to help me?"

"I can," said a deep, friendly voice.

Elsa, frightened, lifted her head to see who was there. She thought she had been alone. And what do you think? She saw a little old man wrapped in a black coat and wearing a broad brimmed hat, and looking at her.

"I am Old Man Wisdom," he said. "I have helped your family often through these many, many years. You, my child, are unhappy, and you think it is because you have to work so much, but you are mistaken. You are unhappy because you want to be idle. I will help you to find happiness. I will loan you ten obedient servants who will do all your work for you."

Then Old Man Wisdom shook his cloak and out of its folds fell ten funny little men. First, they capered and pranced about, making interesting faces at Elsa, but quickly they began to work. They put the room in order. Then they went to the loom and worked the shuttle back and forth so fast that soon the cloth was entirely finished. Elsa could scarcely believe her eyes.

When the ten little men had finished, they ran and stood in a row before Elsa. They arranged themselves in pairs according to their sizes. They waited in silence as if for her to tell them what to do next.

Then Old Man Wisdom said, "Stand up, Elsa! Hold out your hands!"

And to the ten little elves he said:

"Hop-O-My-Thumb,
Lick-the-Pot,
Long Pole,
Heart-in-Hand,
Little-Peter-Funny-Man,
Away, all of you, to your places!"

At once the ten little men hopped on the ends of Elsa's ten fingers, and before she got a good look at them they all disappeared inside her ten fingers!

Then a strange thing happened. Elsa had a queer new feeling. Suddenly she wanted to go to work. She wanted to wash dishes and bake bread and milk the cows. What was it that had happened? Had she dreamed? Had Old Man Wisdom gone, too?

Then Elsa ran out into the kitchen. "What can I do to help?" she asked in a cheerful voice. And she began at once to roll out the dough for the Christmas cookies.

After that day, Elsa rose promptly each morning when she was called. She did her share of the housework without any complaining. The whole family went about their duties with singing and laughter. Christmas day was the happiest Christmas in years.

Now after many years, Elsa grew up and was married to a kind, hard working man who lived on the next farm. The two lived together in happiness, their farm prospered, and their home was a pleasant one that friends liked often to visit.

SERVICE X

CENTRAL THEME: *Learning to work with the Great Creator.*

After the group sings some song of gladness for the growing things of the earth, the leader may read a poem in which the poet has expressed wonder at the creative mystery in a seed. Perhaps holding a nut in his hand (let us say an acorn), he may say something like this:

Introductory Remarks

"Here in my hand is something that makes my thoughts go traveling. It is small, hard, brown, tiny, but it has the power to change itself into something entirely different from what it is now. It may become something large, taller than this room, that birds and people will enjoy for a hundred years. I can even see in my imagination the shape its leaves will have. I know the kind of flowers that will bloom on its branches. I know, too, that some day, instead of one small nut, there may be bushels of nuts hanging on the tree. There is something in this little nut that can bring such changes to pass, provided someone will put it into the ground where the sun can shine on it and some rain will fall on it. This nut can make something out of itself that has never been before, and yet what it will make will surely be an oak tree and not a maple or a chestnut. Somehow this little nut knows what its pattern is to be. How all this can possibly be true of a little brown piece of something here in my hand, that seems unable to move itself at all, I cannot understand. I can only look and wonder.

"Annette Wynne, a poet, felt much the same way that I feel, but she was able to put her thoughts into a poem. As she thought her poem out, she was looking at a beautiful flower in her garden, the

seed of which she had planted. This is how she felt." Read the poem "Summer Glory" in *For Days and Days* by Annette Wynne, Frederick A. Stokes, 1919.

SUMMER GLORY

Is it true
That you
Are indeed
The shriveled seed
In spring I buried underground
Not a bit of green around?

* * *

Now you are
  Full of light
As a star;
  Out of night
Came this glory—grew to this
Little piece of perfect bliss;
O the joy to know
I helped you grow;
What mighty one would not be
Small helper in such glorious ministry.

—ANNETTE WYNNE

The word "ministry" in the last line may need to be explained in using the word "work" and then the last two lines should be reread:

"What mighty one would not be
Small helper in such glorious ministry."

"Annette Wynne felt that every one—no matter who he was or how great a person he was—could not but be glad to help in making such a glorious thing to happen. I shall tell you the story of a man who felt much the same way as this poet."

At this point have the group rise and sing another appropriate song of gladness, and afterwards tell the story of Luther Burbank.

Luther Burbank

Teacher in a School of Plants

Every time we eat a big hot baked potato we should thank a man named Luther Burbank. Every time we enjoy seeing a garden of dahlias or admire tall gladioli standing up straight in a vase, we should also remember Luther Burbank. For it was Luther Burbank who helped potatoes to grow large and white, and it was he who helped gladioli to become graceful and tall.

Luther Burbank called himself a teacher in a plant school. He said, "Weeds are merely unloved plants. They are small and ugly or bad smelling because they are jostled, crowded, cropped and trampled upon, scorched by fierce heat, starved, or perhaps suffering with cold, wet feet, tormented by insects or lack of nourishing food and sunshine." With the right kind of care, Burbank thought almost any kind of flower could become beautiful. His great purpose throughout all his life was to help plants to be bigger and more beautiful or more useful to men. That is why he called himself a teacher of plants and called his garden a plant school.

Not many years ago, Luther Burbank was a small boy, one of a big family of children, living on a farm in Massachusetts. His oldest brother was so much older than Luther that the brother was Luther's first teacher in the little country school.

Luther's mother often told how as a small child, just learning to toddle about, Luther used to love the flowers in her big garden. The gift of a cactus plant growing in a small pot he treated like a doll or teddy bear, carrying it about with him as a pet. The day he stumbled and broke the pot and smashed the cactus he cried as if his heart would break.

As he grew to be a boy able to work, the big garden became his workshop, and the out-of-doors his playground.

One day when he was about eight years old, something happened which he never forgot. It was in the middle of a cold winter, and snow covered the ground. Luther was tired of the cold. In a rebellious mood, he was kicking his way through the snowy woods on some errand when suddenly to his surprise, he saw ahead in the midst of the white snow a patch of green. He saw green grasses and vines with red berries still on them. He could scarcely believe his eyes. He hurried to feel the grass to make sure he was seeing straight. He found the place wet. He was much puzzled. Why had the grass withered and died everywhere else during the cold of winter and yet in this small spot it was green as in spring?

He hurried home to tell his mother. He thought surely he had seen a miracle. But to his surprise he found that his mother did not seem excited. She had seen such places before. "A spring of water from under the ground kept the soil warm enough for the plants to grow," she said. But to Luther Burbank it was still the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to him. He felt he had gone into Mother Nature's cupboard and found a secret treasure. He had learned that plants could do unexpected things if they were helped. This thought started him to watching. He began to study living things. He began to compare different plants and to ask why this, why that? Something began in Luther's mind which he never lost. He began being curious about many things. When he was an old man eighty years old he said, "I am just as inquisitive now as I was when I was a boy of eight."

As a farmer's boy Luther had many duties to perform each day. There were the cows to drive to pasture, logs to be carried into the house for fires, weeds to be pulled, hoeing to be done, and errands to run. From time to time, Luther found ways of earning a little spending money and one of the first things he bought with his own earnings was a microscope. His eyes could see a great many things, but not enough to satisfy him. He wanted to look at the mosses and the stones, and down into the hearts of the flowers. Anything and everything seemed to arouse his curiosity to know more.

When Luther was a young man, another very important thing happened to him. He had bought a few acres of land and had been trying to make a living as a gardener. One day he was walking through his potato patch, when he found something he had never seen before. He said afterwards that he was as much excited as an astronomer discovering a new star in the sky. But what young Mr. Burbank found was only a little seed ball on one of his potato vines! So far as he knew nobody else had ever paid any attention to potato seed balls before. All potato plants were grown by planting pieces of potato in the ground. But Luther Burbank was curious. What might happen if he planted those seeds? Most potatoes in those days were small and dark colored and irregular. Perhaps if he planted these seeds, better potatoes might grow. So he watched the seed ball, and waited until he was sure that the seeds were ripe. Then one morning he went to the patch to pick the seed ball, but alas, it was nowhere to be found! For a moment his heart sank; then he began looking around on the ground, and fortunately he found the ball lying some distance away.

Mr. Burbank put twenty-three small seeds away in a box to keep till spring. When the time came he planted these twenty-three seeds and later twenty-three potato plants grew up. He labeled each plant with a certain number, and in a notebook he kept a record week by week of how each plant was growing. Finally in the late summer, when the plants were dried, he dug up the potatoes, putting those from a single plant in a single pile. The potatoes he found ranged in size from that of a walnut to one that weighed a pound and a half. He found that the

two plants numbered fifteen and seventeen had the largest and best looking potatoes. These he saved and let the others be eaten.

The following spring he planted these few better potatoes, and when he dug the next crop in the late summer he had seven plates full of fine large white potatoes. These seven plates of large potatoes he exhibited at the county fair and many people were amazed at the size and beauty of Burbank's potatoes. Again Burbank planted the largest of his potatoes, and dug the crop in the fall. Finally after two more years of experimenting, all the potatoes that grew in his garden were large and well formed. These he finally sold to a seedsman for $150 and from those seed potatoes have grown millions of bushels of fine potatoes year after year, and millions of people all over the country are enjoying them.

Helping potatoes to grow bigger and whiter was just the first of hundreds of things which Burbank did to help plants to be better. He moved to California where the climate is warm the year round and where he could work in his garden winter and summer. Some of the remarkable changes which he worked out in nuts and fruits and flowers seem like the work of a magician. Some people have called him a wizard, but Burbank was not a magician or a wizard.

He was a man who did most of his studying out of doors. He read the great book that Mother Nature opens up for all of us every day. He watched his plants and cared for them as if they were his children. He tried to figure out why some were beautiful and why others were small and bad smelling and eaten by insects. Burbank was always asking questions of Mother Nature; why this and why not that? How could he help these plants?

Some of you have already heard how Burbank helped the common wild daisies to grow large and beautifully white by joining them with daisies from France and Japan. He helped many other flowers to become more beautiful. He helped poppies to take on other colors, pink and red, and not to be always yellow. He helped verbenas to give up their bad smell and to send out a sweet perfume. He helped grapes to give up their seeds and blackberries their thorns, and plums to become sweet and large with very small pits. He made chestnut trees grow seven feet in one year and bear nuts when they were but two years old, while chestnut trees that are left to grow without help have to take from ten to twenty-five years to grow and to bear nuts.

It would take hours to tell of all the wonderful things which Luther Burbank succeeded in doing—things that other men thought were impossible, and laughed at him for trying to do. Luther Burbank could have become a very rich man, but he never did, because he spent all that he made and more in trying out his experiments.

Our grocery stores today are filled with many kinds of fine vegetables and fruits which we would not have if Burbank had not worked away year after year to improve the seeds from which they were grown. And this is exactly what he wanted to accomplish. He wanted to help as many people as possible.

Burbank wanted to prove that plants and flowers and fruits can be improved if only we will study how to help them. Mother Nature was God to Luther Burbank, and he felt she was a good God on whom he could always depend, and whom he wanted to understand. He tried to work as a partner with God. He couldn't imagine any kind of work that could be more interesting than the work he had chosen to do.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Nature Songs

All creatures of our God and King. St. Francis of Assisi.

Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round. John W. Chadwick.

For flowers that bloom about our feet. Author unknown.

For the beauty of the earth. Folliott S. Pierpont.

Glad that I live am I. Lizette W. Reese.

God of the earth, the sky, the sea. Samuel Longfellow.

God, our Father, made the daylight. Richard Compton.

Kind hearts are the gardens. Author unknown.

Love is to human hearts. Author unknown.

O beautiful for spacious skies. Katharine Lee Bates.

O God, our help in ages past. Isaac Watts.

Spring has now unwrapped the flowers. Old folk song.

The sun is gone down. George Macdonald, in *Songs for Little People* by Frances W. Danielson and Grace W. Conant. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1915.

Teach me Father how to go. Edwin Markham.

This is the way the snow comes. Author unknown.

We lift our hearts in thanks today. Percival Chubb.

We thank thee, Lord. Jeanette E. Perkins.

We thank thee, Lord, for this fair earth. George E. L. Cotton.

When morning gilds the skies. Old folk song.

Who thou art I know not. Harry Kemp. Old folk song.

All these hymns are to be found in *The Beacon Song and Service Book,* Beacon Press, Boston, Mass., except as indicated.

Nature Poems

Heart free, hand free,
Blue above, brown under,
All the world to me
Is a place of wonder.
Sunshine, moonshine,
Stars and winds a-blowing,
All into this heart of mine
Flowing, flowing, flowing!

—WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE.

I believe in miracles
For I have seen it snow.
And I believe in God
For I have watched a small seed grow
From out the ground where nothing was
Into a Golden Glow.

—KATHLEEN MILLAY.

Sky so bright,
Blue and light,
Stars how many hast thou?
Countless stars!
Countless times shall God
be praised now!

Forest green,
Cool, serene,
Leaves how many hast thou?
Countless leaves!
Countless times shall God
be praised now!

Deepest sea,
Wide and free,
Waves how many hast thou?
Countless waves!
Countless times shall God
be praised now!

Eternity,
Eternity,
Hours how many hast thou?
Countless hours!
Countless times shall God
be praised now!

OLD FOLK SONG
— arranged by FRANSICUS NAGLER.

MIRACLES

Why who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,

* * *

Or stand under trees in the woods,

* * *

Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive
of a summer forenoon,
Or animals feeding in the fields,
Or birds—or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown
or of the stars shining so quiet and bright,
Or the exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in the spring;

* * *

To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the ships, with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?

—WALT WHITMAN.

Poems on Trees

TO THE WAYFARER

Ye who pass by and would raise your hand against me,
Hearken ere you harm me!
I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights,
The friendly shade screening you from the summer sun.
My fruits are refreshing drafts,
Quenching your thirst as you journey on.
I am the beam that holds your house,
The board of your table,
The bed on which you lie,
And the timber that builds your boat.
I am the handle of your hoe,
The door of your homestead.
I am the wood of your cradle,
And the shell of your coffin.
I am the bread of kindness, and the flower of beauty.
Ye who pass by, listen to my prayer: harm me not.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

NOTE: This poem is fastened to a tree in one of the parks in Seville, Spain.

"Do Trees Have Feelings?" by Charlotte P. Gilman from *How Miracles Abound* Leaflet No. 4 on "Trees." Boston: The Beacon Press, 1941.

"A Prayer" by Edwin Markham from *Days and Deeds.* Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1932.

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"Strange Collection" by Dorothy B. Thompson from *How Miracles Abound* Leaflet No. 1 on "Trees." Boston: The Beacon Press, 1941.

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Poems on Stars and Sky

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Star bright, star-light—
Many's the star I see tonight—
Star bright, star-light—
Tell me, is it true?
I wish I may, I wish I might
Get the wish I wish tonight—
Star bright, star-light
Tell me is it true?

—AN OLD FOLK RHYME.

I see a great round wonder rolling through the air;

. . . . . .

I see the shaded part on one side, where the sleepers are sleeping—and the sun-lit part on the other side,

I see the curious silent change of the light and shade,

I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them, as my land is to me.

—WALT WHITMAN.
Leaves of Grass.

When I sitting heard the astronomer
where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired
and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off
by myself,
In the mystical, moist night air, and
from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

—WALT WHITMAN.
Leaves of Grass.

"Baby Toes" by Carl Sandburg from *Smoke and Steel and Slabs of the Sunburned West.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1920.

"The Rainbow" by Christina Rossetti from *Sing-Song.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.

"Stars" by Sara Teasdale from *Stars Tonight.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930. (*How Miracles Abound* Leaflet No. 1 on "Stars.")

Poems on Dew, Frost and Snow

For a Dewdrop

Small shining drop, no lady's ring
Holds so beautiful a thing.
At sun-up in the early air
The sweetness of the world you snare.
Within your little mirror lie
The green grass and the winged fly,
The lowest flower, the tallest tree
In your crystal I can see,
Why in your tiny globe you hold
The sun himself, a midge of gold.

—ELEANOR FARJEON.

Dew

The winds were still and the stars were
bright,
And the fairies danced all night, all night,
Then scattered in glee from their infinite
store
The sparkling jewels and gems they
wore—
Sapphires and riches that gleam in the
sun—
Opals and pearls where their dancing was
done.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

Frost

He went to the windows of those who
slept,
And over each pane like a fairy crept,
Wherever he breathed, wherever he stept,
By the light of the moon was seen
Most beautiful things. There were flowers
and trees,
There were bevies of birds and swarms
of bees,
There were cities, thrones, temples, and
towers and these
All pictured in silver sheen.

—HANNA FLAGG GOULD.

Snowflakes

Here delicate snow-stars, out of the cloud
Come floating down in airy play,
Like spangles dropped from the glistening crowd
That whiten by night the Milky Way.

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

To a Snowflake

What heart could have thought you?—

. . . . . .

Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely.

. . . . . .

"God was my shaper.

. . . . . .

He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapor,

. . . . . .

So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,

. . . . . .

With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost."

—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

"Great White World,"
"It Isn't Only Flakes That Fall," and
"Song of the Snowflakes" by Annette Wynne from *For Days and Days.* New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1919.

"Spider Web" by James S. Tippett from *A World to Know.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933.

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Poems on Snails and Fishes

The Chambered Nautilus

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Pretty Shell

Tell your secrets pretty shell
I will promise not to tell.

Humming, humming, soft and low
All about the sea I know.

You are murmuring I think
Of the seaweeds green and pink.

Pretty shell! I'm waiting here,
Come and whisper in my ear.

—DOROTHY IRMA COOKE.

Lovely Shapes

I have found such lovely shapes in the world:
Lines that flow around a flower—a crescent moon—a star,
Curves and circles, but the best of all I love
The spiral as it weaves its way from just one point;
And up and out it sweeps until I feel that I must live that way,
And not forget to make my life, a curve that never ends.

—DOROTHY IRMA COOKE.

The swelling contours of this worthy clam
Are here engraved upon his ample shell.
Each growth ring spells one feast, each line a fast.
One feast, one fast, and thus his life ran on
Through many a varied year until the storm
Stopped short the life, but left the shell unharmed.

—W. K. GREGORY.
Natural History, Oct. 1940

"The Goldfish" by Dorothy Aldis from *Everything and Anything.* Boston: Hale, Cushman & Flint, 1929.

"Little Snail" by Hilda Conkling from *Poems by a Little Girl.* New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1920.

"Shell Castle" by Rowens B. Bennett from *Under the Tent of the Sky.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.

Poems on Flowers and Seeds

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

—ALFRED TENNYSON.

Talking in Their Sleep

"You think I am dead,"
The apple tree said,
"Because I have never a leaf to show—
Because I stoop,
And my branches droop,
And the dull grey mosses over me grow!
But I'm alive in trunk and shoot,
The buds of May
I fold away—
But I pity the withered grass at my root!"

"You think I am dead,"
The quick grass said,
"Because I have parted with stem and blade,
But under the ground
I am safe and sound
With the snow's thick blanket over me laid.
I'm all alive and ready to shoot,
Should the spring of the year
Come dancing here—
But I pity the flower without branch or root!"

"You think I am dead,"
A soft voice said,
"Because not a branch or root I own!
I never have died
But close I hide,
In a plumy seed that the wind has sown.
Patient I wait through the long winter hours;
You will see me again—
I shall laugh at you then,
Out of the eyes of a hundred flowers!"

—EDITH M. THOMAS.

In the heart of a seed,
Buried deep so deep,
A dear little plant
Lay fast asleep.

"Wake" said the sunshine,
"And creep to the light;"
"Wake", said the voice
Of the raindrops bright.

The little plant heard,
And it rose to see
What the beautiful
Outside world might be.

—KATE L. BROWN.

"The Little Plant in the Window Speaks" and "Summer Glory" by Annette Wynne from *For Days and Days.* New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1919.

"One of Those Things You Can Know" by Jeanette E. Perkins from *Children's Worship in the Church School.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939.

"The Pot of Yellow Crocuses" by Dorothy Aldis from *Before Things Happen.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939.

"The Sun Is Gone Down" by George Macdonald from *Children's Worship in the Church School.*

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